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Ball State faculty, students and classroom instrumental in robotics team's success (2/17/2006)

The Muncie/Delaware County FIRST Robotics Team has entered its final building phase. The robot will be finished by midnight on Feb. 21, when it will be shipped to FIRST headquarters for inspection prior to the regional competition at Purdue University March 16-18.

If the robot competes well, the team may have an opportunity to compete at the National Championship event, held in the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, April 27-29, said Cheryl LeBlanc, coordinator of the Muncie/Delaware Robotics Team

The team has been working on its robot approximately 17 hours a week since Jan. 7 in Ball State's Applied Technology Building. The assistance of mentors representing Ball State students and faculty, as well as Ontario Systems, Maxon Corporation, Ivy Tech State College, Delaware Machine and Tool and AltairNano Technologies has made the process an exceptional learning opportunity for the students involved.

Involvement in the Muncie/Delaware FIRST team began last fall with hands-on workshops taught by people with practical experience building machinery (engineers, designers and computer programmers).

The team consists of area high school students from Burrus; the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities; Muncie Public Schools (Central, Southside and the Career Center); Yorktown, Delta, Cowan, Wapahani, Wes-Del and Monroe Central; and homeschooled students.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is a multinational organization that aspires to change the way students see engineering, science and technology. High school students and teachers team up with professionals from local companies to design, build and test robots capable of performing specified game tasks.

The competition was founded in 1989 by Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway Human Transporter, and in 1992 the inaugural FIRST competition was held with 28 teams. Fifteen years later, it has grown to more than 1,000 teams. More information about the FIRST competition can be found at www.usfirst.org.

Kari Jones



The 2005 FIRST robotics competition.